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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUDAPEST 000686

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CE JAMIE MOORE

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ENRG](#) [EPET](#) [BE](#) [SP](#) [SR](#) [KV](#) [HU](#)
SUBJECT: TALKING TO THE NEIGHBORS: HUNGARIAN AND SERBIAN
FOREIGN MINISTERS MEET IN BUDAPEST

REF: A. BELGRADE 841
[1](#)B. BUDAPEST 667

Classified By: PolOff Ryan Leong, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) During a September 11, 2009, conversation with PolOff, Desk Officer Emil Varadi of the MFA's Territorial Department Number 3 provided a readout of the September 10 meeting between Hungarian FM Peter Balazs and Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic. As note-taker for the Hungarian side, Varadi likened the meeting to a working dinner rather than a formal meeting, given Balazs's busy schedule earlier in the day in support of the meeting between Hungarian PM Gordon Bajnai and his Slovakian counterpart, Robert Fico (ref b). Much of the Balazs-Jeremic conversation focused on preparing for an October 12-13 state visit by Serbian President Boris Tadic.

REGIONAL ISSUES: DANUBE STRATEGY AND KOSOVO

[1](#)2. (C) According to Varadi, Balazs and Jeremic also discussed a number of regional issues.

--Balazs proposed that Jeremic participate in a meeting of Hungarian, Serbian, and Croatian foreign ministers later this year, perhaps in southern Hungary. The idea came in part from the EU's Danube Strategy. Jeremic said that with Croatian elections scheduled for March 2010, discussions on concrete proposals might be of limited utility. One possible topic of discussion could be linking up regional energy pipelines and other resources, possibly including a natural gas storage facility in Hungary for use by neighboring countries.

--Balazs invited Jeremic to attend an October 6 working lunch of Visegrad 4 foreign ministers in Budapest, which would include representatives from Spain, Belgium, and Kosovo. The focus of the lunch would be the western Balkans, including Kosovo. Jeremic said he would attend, but only with a number of stipulations, such as not having nameplates at the working lunch, seating the Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) representative next to the Kosovo representative, and allowing the UNMIK representative to speak before the Kosovo representative. Varadi noted that the MFA had not planned to invite UNMIK, but would consider Jeremic's request.

BILATERAL ISSUES: BORDER CROSSINGS AND MINORITIES

[1](#)3. (C) On the bilateral side, Varadi said the two foreign ministers touched on cross-border and minorities questions.

--The major cross-border question was whether to reopen the old Roszke border crossing. The crossing was closed when it was replaced by a more modern facility on the E75 highway. However, a number of local Hungarians and Serbians have complained that it is difficult for heavy agricultural

machinery, bicycles, or pedestrians to use the highway crossing.

--Varadi said FM Balazs again raised the issue of establishing a joint Hungarian-Serbian committee to survey WWII atrocities, initially by Hungarians against Serbs and then the later reprisals by Serbs against Hungarians. Varadi said this was a touchy issue with Belgrade and was not surprised by Jeremic's lukewarm response. Jeremic purportedly said he did not want to publicly raise this proposal at this time but would rather table it until Presidents Solyom and Tadic could address it during Tadic's upcoming state visit. Balazs also expressed Hungary's interest in more progress on Hungarian graves in Serbia, but Jeremic did not make any commitment in this regard.

¶4. (C) Comment: Compared to Hungarian relations with Slovakia, this was a cordial meeting among friends with a number of bilateral and multi-lateral proposals on the table.

Jeremic was predictably evasive on topics of reconciliation about past offenses by or against Hungarian minorities in Serbia, with much more interest in concrete proposals about energy security, participation in regional ministerials and smoothing the way for Tadic's upcoming visit. Balazs, the elder statesman to Jeremic's youth, was quite exhausted by the end of a busy day which included a closely watched meeting between Bajnai and Fico. Varadi expressed some disappointment that Balazs was not on his sharpest game at the meeting and was unable to cajole Jeremic into even minimal commitment on Hungarian minorities or push back against Jeremic's pre-conditions for the courtesy invitation to the Visegrad 4 meeting.

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